

Meeting Summary

ROYAL STREET BUS GARAGE AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, April 2, 2014
Alexandria City Hall, Room 2000

Members Present:

Mary Lyman, Committee Chair, Alexandria Planning Commission
Nancy Appleby, At-Large
Charlie Cantelli, Alexandria House Homeowners Association
Jim Doll, Chatham Square Homeowners Association
Steve Goodman, Garrett's Mill Homeowners Association
Carolyn Merck, Old Town Civic Association
Richard Moncure, Portner's Landing Condominium Association
Janet Powell, Portner's Landing Homeowners Association
Cathy Puskar, NVBIA / NAIOP
Patricia "Velator" Smith, Annie B. Rose House
Tom Soapes, North Old Town Independent Citizens' Association
Connie Staudinger, Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (for Roy Priest)
Daniel Straub, Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee
Ken Wire, NVBIA / NAIOP

Members Absent:

Joseph Resende, At-Large

City Staff:

Jeff Farner, Department of Planning and Zoning
Rob Kerns, Department of Planning and Zoning
Carrie Beach, Department of Planning and Zoning
Jessica McVary, Department of Planning and Zoning
Richard Lawrence, Department of Planning and Zoning
Jon Frederick, Office of Housing

Guests:

Ernest Lehmann, NOTICe
Betty Kuehule, Alexandria House
Christa Watters, NOTICe
Bill Sullivan, NOTICe and Alexandria House
Rosalyn Doggett, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Welcome and Introduction

Staff welcomed the Committee and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. Staff also reiterated the Committee's mission and ground rules. Staff then provided a brief overview of the Old Town North Small Area Plan summary, which was distributed to the Committee members in advance of the meeting. Finally, staff provided additional information related to building scale and transitions.

Draft Design Standards Discussion

- The Committee then began to discuss the draft design principles.
- A Committee member noted that the Old Town North Small Area Plan identifies the land use appropriate for the block.
- A Committee member requested that the Committee not be committed to what is specified for this block in the existing Small Area Plan, but rather be more flexible.
- A Committee member inquired if the Small Area Plan is a legal document. A Committee member, as well as staff, responded that the Plan is not a legal document, but provides a guide for future land use and development. The proposed design principles establish requirements outside of the Small Area Plan.
- The Committee then developed the following design principles:
 - Any development proposals shall be compatible with the goals recommended in the Old Town North Small Area Plan as well as the Urban Design Guidelines, as amended, except as set forth below. The Committee unanimously agreed to this principle.
 - At the pedestrian streetscape level, any proposed development shall provide for a variety of architectural elevations, quality architectural details and materials and articulation of the wall plane. The proposed public streetscape on all street frontages shall be designed to encourage pedestrian activity by providing for accessibility, adequate space for sidewalks, canopy trees and groundcover plantings. Wythe Street shall be designed as a special streetscape, emphasizing a linkage to the Potomac River. The Committee unanimously agreed to this principle.
 - Development shall be predominantly residential and may include a limited amount of ground floor accessory retail, personal service or community-serving use. The Committee unanimously agreed to this principle.
 - All parking shall be located either below-grade or in rear load garages and accessed from an internal alley. Two Committee members opposed this principle.

- All existing and proposed utilities shall be located underground. The Committee unanimously agreed to this principle.
- The Committee asked staff to review the following principle and propose new language:
 - The building massing and heights will be configured in a way that provides a variety of heights and massing on each street frontage.
- The Committee discussed building heights, and drafted the following principle, but requested that staff provide additional information on building code and construction types, prior to adopting this principle:
 - Heights shall transition from higher on the northern portion of the site to lower along the southern portion of the site. Heights adjacent to townhomes shall be no more than 50 feet. Opportunity for additional height, up to 60 feet, is possible on the northeast corner of the site or within the central portion of the site if adequate transitions and building step-backs are provided to maintain a pedestrian-oriented streetscape. Two Committee members opposed this draft principle.
- The Committee deleted the following principles:
 - Provide an enhanced green open space / setback along Wythe Street to establish a connection with the Potomac River.
 - Private open space shall be provided for future residents.
- The Committee agreed to discuss the following design principles at the next Committee meeting:
 - A potential rezoning to a CRMU-zone and a maximum of 2.5 FAR will be considered.
 - The proposed buildings shall utilize the architecture to recall the industrial heritage of the site. Consider incorporating a portion of the existing structure as part of the new development.
 - As part of the rezoning and development special use permit process, a community room, off-site open space improvements and ____ shall be provided. The final amount and location of these contributions will be determined as part of the rezoning process.
- The Committee agreed that the design principles should be organized from macro to micro, and should be numbered.